

# Startling Secrets of Society Told by Britain's "Perfect Woman"

*"Most of the Women I Know Are Unfit to Become Mothers of Englishmen," She Says, Denouncing the Vices of the Smart Set*



Mrs. Hamilton, in Her Striking Fishnet "Mermaid" Creation.



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Mrs. Hamilton, "Britain's Perfect Woman", in the Garb She Wore When She Came Within 9 Miles of Swimming the English Channel.

## By Mrs. Arthur Hamilton

*MOST of the women I know squander their lives at cards, soak their systems with liquors, smoke cigarettes and live for fickle flirtations and flabby frivolities; and not a few deaden their brains and stimulate their nerves with forbidden drugs. The wholesome, healthy, hearty British woman who mothered a great race seems to have become almost extinct.*

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London. BRITISH society, accustomed to great criticism from the outsider with a mere lift of the eyebrows, has been stirred to the depths by a slashing indictment of its morals from one of its own inner circle.

"Most of the society women I know," declared Mrs. Arthur Hamilton, "are victims of cards, drink, or drugs. Illicit romances naturally go with these excesses."

Had a bishop said that, London would have yawned. Had an American tourist said it, London would have laughed. But because of her prominence in society, Mrs. Hamilton's assertion is the main topic of dispute at town clubs and country estates, and opinion is

about equally divided as to whether she is right or wrong.

For Mrs. Hamilton speaks whereof she knows. The daughter of one of the oldest families in the Empire, the wife of a Colonel with a valiant war record, herself an athlete of international fame, called "Britain's Perfect Woman," she was cradled and reared in the aristocracy. When she speaks of "society" it is spelled with a capital "S", and when she accuses the women she knows she strikes at peeresses and honorables galore.

At any time a statement from Mrs. Hamilton was not to be taken lightly. At the moment when society's morals have been under fire from other sources this testimony from one of the chosen came with double force. And since she gave it such astounding revelations have been made by others that Scotland Yard may take matters into its own hands and launch a crusade against the night clubs, gambling halls and other resorts which London society is reputed to frequent in ever-growing numbers.

Because of Mrs. Hamilton's love for the outdoor life many are disposed to discount her criticism on that ground. A woman whose days are spent chiefly in swimming, riding and other sports, they say, will not have a fair viewpoint of the pleasures of those who do not go in for the same sort of recreation she does.

How can one whose goal in life was to swim the English Channel—a goal, by the way, which she narrowly missed—have any understanding of people whose ambitions lie on dry land. And if one chooses to play bridge instead of polo, what of it? Is she to be judged by another whose sympathies admittedly lie in the opposite direction?

Thus run the whispers and undertones of resentment in London drawing rooms. Whispers they are because few care to cross lances openly with Mrs. Hamilton. The same outspoken frankness that prompted her first volley is one of her chief characteristics. She will back up her statements with facts, if necessary, and there are times when London society does not care for facts, particularly about itself.

This is one of them. During the war, when all eyes and hearts were centred at the front, society was forgotten. Nothing mattered—noting but the fate of the Empire. Pleasure, passion, happiness, these were things to be snatched feverishly, drained as one tosses off a styrrup cup, and flung behind for the grim business in hand. Society, like the rest of London, plunged headlong into war, and along with it into the dizzy, brief interludes of dissipation that made life bearable.

Great Britain came out of the war, battered but whole, to begin the arduous task of rejuvenation. But society, which

had learned to live life as though the next moment might be the last, could not, did not change. There, at its hand, were the sweets it had tasted so swiftly in the war years, waiting to be eaten to the full. And society, idle for the first time in five years, sat down to the table and gorged.

The result has been not merely such orgies of dissipation as London has never known before, but at last an outcry of protest from saner heads. Of such as these is Mrs. Hamilton.

"She is right," declare those among her acquaintances who are fearless enough to admit it. "War habits, war reaction, idleness, whatnot have caused an astounding laxness of morals among English women. Particularly is this true of the upper classes. Not only drinking is common, but many women actually carry little vials for their drug supply. Some of them cannot attend a dance or a reception without such stimulant. As for cards, it is a known fact that many English society women go night after night to places in the West End of London where they gamble thousands of pounds at one sitting."

The police, too, declare Mrs. Hamilton has not exaggerated, although they say they can do little because of the secrecy with which commercial gambling, drinking and "dope" palaces are surrounded and the fact that most of this wild dissipation goes on in private homes.

The stranger in London finds this side of life in the world's capital a closed book to him. Most American tourists, stopping here for a week or so, hasten on to Paris. "London is dead after 10 o'clock at night," complained a prominent American motion picture magnate recently, after he had sought in vain along the main thoroughfares for the gayeties of which he had heard so many rumors.

And yet, had he but known the ropes or had the entree to certain London society people Paris would seem tame to him, assert those familiar with the real night life of London. They tell stories of clubs hidden behind dark shutters in by-streets off the "grand, stories of "dope dens" in Limehouse; of more exclusive "drug palaces" in the West End; of gambling orgies, drinking bouts and strange, vicious practices which go on in these places; stories not only of places but of people frequenting them, which indicate that Mrs. Hamilton has but scratched the surface in her charge.

One of these tales concerns the daughter of a dimitary whose name is not unknown in the brightest pages of British history and which occupies to-day a prominent place in Burke's Peerage.

She was an ambulance driver in the war. It is said she acquired the drug habit first on a leave in Paris, where the Montmartre resorts drew her on a night of idle pleasuring. There she first tasted cocaine. She took a few grains back to the front with her—as much through curiosity as anything else. In the hell of flameshot days and nights the temptation was too much for her. The drug gripped her.

For months after her return to London neither family nor friends were aware of her secret habit, of her clandestine trips

to the West End haunt where, for a few dreamy hours, she found forgetfulness from the gnawing desire that drove her. Her falling health, her broken beauty they put down to the effects of service overseas.

When her father finally discovered her condition she defied him. "I gave myself to England and this is what it did for me," she is said to have told him. "You can't help me now."

Nor could he. It was too late. Moreover, her parent learned, to his horror, that her younger sister was also a drug victim. The double blow broke him. He died, leaving a fortune—a heritage which the two sisters to-day are wasting in reckless abandon to the drug. It will not be long, predict the gossips, before a coat-of-arms on a dusty window in a fashionable London street will be the sole survivor of one of Britain's most illustrious houses.

It is such cases as this, declares Mrs. Arthur Hamilton, that led her to protest.

England once boasted not alone as pure womanhood as any in the world, but the healthiest. If that reputation is to be maintained it is Mrs. Hamilton's conviction that the aristocracy of England's womanhood must point the way, whereas now its example is of the worst.

The cure she favors is a return to athletics. Golf, swimming, tennis, games and out-of-door pursuits of all kinds she urges as the salvation of the British gentilewoman. The body humming with red blood pumped by wholesome exercises, has no room for narcotics; the mind and muscles healthily tired out from a day in the open seek no further spur. On this theory she would have a revival of that type of Englishwoman who, a decade ago, was in her element in the saddle or on the links.

What effect, if any, Mrs. Hamilton's severe arraignment of her countrywomen will have, London is awaiting with interest. While here and there women approve her words and assert that "something ought to be done about it," there is as yet no organized movement on society's part to change its ways.

Though one might scarcely term Mrs. Hamilton "a lone voice crying in the wilderness," her compatriots are either too busy, too indifferent or too gaily to do much except talk.

"She's right," say some, and let it go at that.

"She's wrong," reply others. "What does she know of it, anyway?—a woman who is interested only in sports!"

In the meantime, London's night life goes on—crimson, flaming, wanton, behind the barred doors and dark shutters that hide it from the stranger within her gates. It will take more than Mrs. Hamilton to change it, declare habitués of the night clubs—perhaps the police—perhaps society itself. Until then, those who know their London will tell you that not Paris nor Port Said, nor Buenos Ayres, nor the crowded ports of the Far East, nor any city of the two hemispheres can offer more sin and more suffering, more raptures and more debasements than London as it is to-day.

Mrs. Hamilton as a Model at a Society Fancy Dress Fete.

